



CHARTER '89  
FOR PRESERVATION OF  
THE BULGARIAN NATURE HERITAGE

(adapted English version)

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*Preamble*

Bulgaria is a country of remarkable nature heritage. Due to its geographical diversity, population's moderate density and uneven distribution, as well as the relatively early beginning of conservation, many valuable nature areas can still be found there. Some of them are unequalled elsewhere in Europe and properly belong to the world nature heritage. At the same time, the country's socio-economic development goes along with insensitive and often shortsighted attitude toward nature; together with the incompleteness of the present conservation area network, this puts in jeopardy the future of Bulgaria's nature heritage.

1. *Development of National Conservation Area Network*

- (1) In order to preserve the entire variety of representative ecosystems and faunistic complexes, species-formation centres and rare and threatened species, as well as protect characteristic landscapes, it is crucial to provide adequate structure of the conservation area network in all biogeographical regions of Bulgaria and the adjacent Black Sea aquatory.
- (2) It is necessary to create new and expand existing nature reserves and national parks, so as to preserve viable populations of the species, allow for continuation of the evolution process, preserve the natural interface and environment-formation capability of all biogeographical regions. A high proportion of the existing conservation areas are of insufficient size, which fails to guarantee stability and survival of their genetic fund.
- (3) Through a programme to be worked out by the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, to complete the network of national parks by 1993 and that of nature reserves by 1996. Simultaneously to develop the network of regional parks, protected landscapes and protected areas, so that by 2005 the conservation areas cover at least 15 per cent of the national territory.
- (4) Conservation areas of all types should reach in perspective (approximately by 2015) 25 per cent of this country's total area.

2. *Key Territories*

It is crucial for the formation of an adequate national network of protected ecosystems and landscapes to:

- (1) Set up the proposed Central Balkan National Park.

- (2) Set up a national park and considerably extend the present fragmentary nature reserve network in the Western Rhodopes Mountains.
- (3) Create a biosphere reserve on Mount Vitosha to incorporate the existing nature reserves Bistrishko Branishte and Torfeno Branishte, as well as the prohibited catchment areas south of Cherni Vrah Peak.
- (4) Further expand the nature reserve networks in Rila Mountain and Pirin Mountain.
- (5) Merge the three existing nature reserves in Ropotamo National Park.
- (6) Set up regional parks in the following mountains: Eastern Rhodopes; Strandzha, including the seashore south of the town of Ahtopol; Western Rhodopes; Plana and Lozenska Planina; Sredna Gora; Osogovska Planina; Vrachanska Planina, including the Iskar Gorge; Iztochna Stara Planina (Eastern Balkan Mountains); Shipchenska Planina; as well as in the Kraishite Highlands.
- (7) Set up the protected landscapes Severno Chernomorie (Northern Black Sea Coast) and Yuzhno Chernomorie (Southern Black Sea Coast).

### 3. *Conservation Areas as Open Systems*

- (1) Conservation areas are integral parts of the respective regions and ought to function within the framework of regional sustainable development programmes, so that the local communities could benefit directly from them.
- (2) Although being the best preserved fragments of Bulgaria's nature, conservation areas cannot exist as isolated islands of ecological prosperity. Their fragile environmental balance could hardly be maintained without ecologized human activity in the rest of the country and scaling intervention in devastated regions where the environment is unable to self-recover.
- (3) Conservation areas are exposed to transmitted air, water and soil pollution, anthropogenic changes in the microclimate, as well as noise pollution and visual intrusion. Therefore, the struggle for nature heritage preservation is inseparable from the struggle for sound environment.

### 4. *Hot Issues*

Bulgaria's nature, not excluding conservation areas, is subject to systematic onslaughts on behalf of narrow-minded interests. What is needed now is not just to oppose such practices, but to fight also for elimination of their consequences accumulated during the last few decades, in order to undermine the *fait accompli* tactics. For this purpose, it is urgently necessary to:

- (1) Take under protection the remaining undeveloped patches of the Bulgarian Black Sea Coast; ban any further developments in the one-hundred-meter coastal strip.
- (2) Remove all facilities and infrastructure from the territory and the buffer zones of the coastal nature reserves and national parks Baltata, Zlatni Pyasatsi, Kamchia and Ropotamo.
- (3) Close the game preserves 'Mazalat' and 'Rila', which cater for the top elite, while interfering with conservation of nature.

- (4) Stop all works on catching Rila's waters. Added to previous water catchments for the 'Belmeken-Sestrimo' hydroelectric facility, this scheme threatens the ecosystem of Rila Mountain and considerably depreciates the planned Rila National Park.
- (5) Abandon the controversial project of diverting waters from Mesta River (called Nestos in Greece) to the basin of Maritsa River (respectively Evros/Merich in Greece/Turkey) for irrigation purposes.
- (6) Dismantle the newly developed facilities and infrastructure in Pirin National Park, inconsistent with its status of a World Heritage Site; rule out any further projects for 'development' of Pirin Mountain.
- (7) Dismantle all facilities located in Bistrishko Branishte Biosphere Reserve on Mount Vitosha, including the ski-piste 'Vitoshko Lale' and its ski-lift.
- (8) Bring in accordance with the international standards Vitosha National Park, doyen of the Balkans. Stop any reconstruction and modernization there, leaving the existing out-of-place facilities (s.a. hotels and resting houses) to decay. Cancel the new regulation plan of Mount Vitosha, which conceives numerous further developments: roads, lifts, accomodation etc. Cease the grazing practices recently resumed in Northern Vitosha.
- (9) Take action to preserve the aboriginal domestic fauna. A number of aboriginal breeds have already disappeared, others have become rare.

## 5. *The High Bulgarian Mountains*

The problem of nature conservation in Rila, Pirin and Vitosha Mountains is highly sensitive and of wider world dimension for two reasons. First, together with the Western Rhodopes and certain parts of Stara Planina (Balkan Mountains), these are the last sizeable, relatively undisturbed nature areas in Bulgaria, possessing biological diversity unparalleled on the rest of the continent. On the other hand, these regions face drastic irreversible changes within the next 5-10 years.

## 6. *The Wetlands*

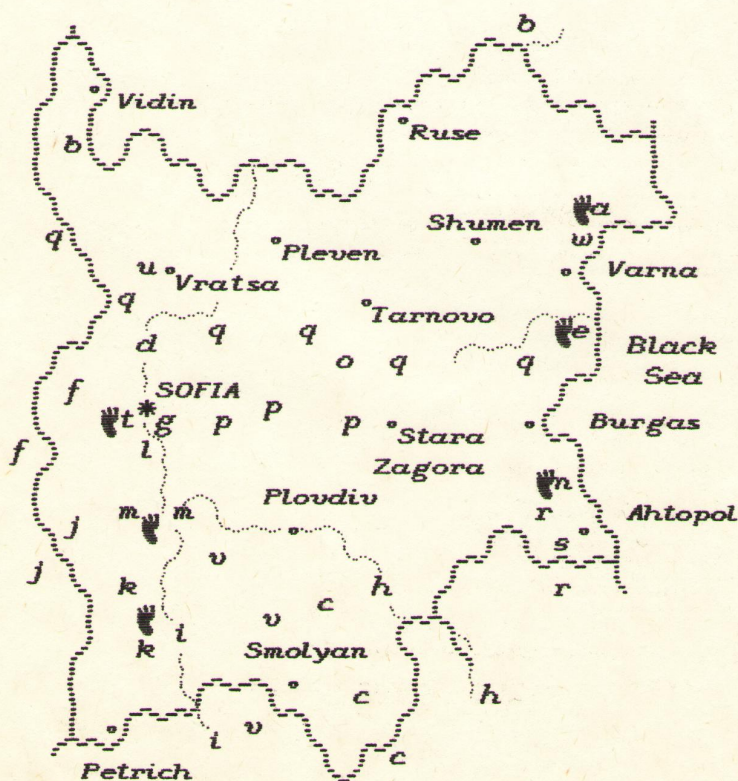
It is well known that wetlands play a special role in preserving the natural genofund. However, human activities have reduced their total area in this country twentyfold during the last century. A national action programme for preservation of the existing and partial reconstruction of destroyed wetlands is needed to reverse this unfavourable tendency. In particular, such a programme should:

- (1) Help save the so called 'longoz' forests along the lower courses of the Black Sea rivers Batova Reka, Kamchia, Ropotamo and Veleka. This extremely rare European dense forest, a moderate-zone analogue to the tropical rainforest, is threatened by the anthropogenic factor.
- (2) Give appropriate conservation status to the river islands in major Bulgarian rivers s.a. Danube and Maritsa.
- (3) Put under protection gravel-pit and other small artificial lakes, which are gene pools of rare aquatic flora and fauna species.

## 7. Factors for Preservation of the Bulgarian Nature Heritage

The preservation of Bulgaria's nature heritage requires new ecological consciousness and culture on behalf of all social strata, to find its expression in:

- (1) Efficient long-term governmental policies on nature resources and environment, based on scientific foundation, employing the experience of ecologically advanced countries and subject to public control; only the latter could guarantee the formation and practical implementation of such policies.
- (2) Upgrading the authority and independence of the state Committee for Environmental Protection, which should become directly responsible to the National Assembly.
- (3) Development of a diversified network of independent environmentalist groups and organizations, as well as active commitment of other non-governmental organizations to nature conservation.
- (4) Implementation of particular projects jointly with the WWF, the IUCN and other international and national organizations. Such projects of world significance may provide for assessment of the present condition and complex measures for preserving the nature of the Western Rhodopes, the high Bulgarian mountains Rila, Pirin and Vitosha, as well as the Black Sea 'longoz' forests, to be financed through debt-for-nature swaps and fund raising among Bulgarian institutions and individuals.
- (5) Joint inter-Balkan projects for preservation of the nature heritage in border areas.
- (6) Active participation in preserving the nature heritage in other countries, the World Ocean and the Antarctic.



### REFERENCE

- |   |                       |
|---|-----------------------|
| a | Baltata & Batova Reka |
| b | Danube                |
| c | Eastern Rhodopes      |
| d | Iskar                 |
| e | Kamchia               |
| f | Kraishte              |
| g | Lozenska Planina      |
| h | Maritsa               |
| i | Mesta                 |
| j | Osogovska Planina     |
| k | Pirin                 |
| l | Plana                 |
| m | Rila                  |
| n | Ropotamo              |
| o | Shipchenska Planina   |
| p | Sredna Gora           |
| q | Stara Planina         |
| r | Strandzha             |
| s | Veleka                |
| t | Vitosha               |
| u | Vrachanska Planina    |
| v | Western Rhodopes      |
| w | Zlatni Pyasatsi       |
| ☞ | threatened wilderness |